



North Fork of Pound Lake 2006

North Fork of Pound Lake is a 154-acre reservoir located in Wise County. The lake was formed in 1966. North Fork has a shoreline length of 13.5 miles, a maximum depth of 55 feet and an average depth of 19 feet. The area surrounding the lake is almost completely forested. Some mature oak and hemlock stands are visible, and poplar trees now stand where mountain families once raised corn on steep hillsides. The U.S. Forest Service now owns most of the land surrounding the lake. The dam is owned and operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The lake supports a diverse assemblage of fish species. Largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass are available. Bluegill, black and white crappie, rock bass, walleye, musky, channel catfish, flathead catfish, bullheads and carp are also present. The primary forage fishes are alewives and gizzard shad, which were stocked in the late 1990's. The Department stocked alewives in 1997, and the gizzard shad originated from an anonymous source.

Bass populations have improved considerably in the past few years. Total catch rates for all three bass species typically exceeds 100 fish per hour of sampling, which is well above average for Southwest Virginia reservoirs. The 2005 sample catch rates were down somewhat, probably due to unseasonably cool weather during May. Largemouth and spotted bass are abundant. Smallmouth are not as common, but do provide angling diversity. The size structure of the largemouth population is improving steadily. The percentage of adult bass that exceed 15 inches has increased nearly three fold since 1997. This could be the result of the 14 to 18-inch protective slot length limit for bass that was adopted in 1999. The availability of alewives and gizzard shad for forage also helps improve bass size.

Bluegill abundance and size structure has declined in recent years. This could be the result of increased competition for food between bluegills and alewives. There is still some good bluegill fishing to be had though, and redear sunfish are scheduled to be stocked in 2006.

Crappie populations have improved in recent years. Both black and white crappie are doing well in the lake. Pound Lake has the best white crappie population in Southwest Virginia. More than 50 percent of the adult crappie sampled exceeded 10 inches. Several trophy crappie are landed each year. Again, the improvement may be related to the more restrictive size limit (10-inch minimum) established in 1999, or the improved forage opportunities following the introduction of shad. The number of crappie collected per hour of sampling increased sharply in 2002. One factor that could have

influenced the number of crappie collected in sampling is the addition of several hinge-tree fish attractors. These attractors may have concentrated the crappie in shallow water where they are easier to capture. If that is the case, the attractors should also make the crappie more accessible to anglers.

Walleyes were first stocked into North Fork in 1998. About 7,700 fingerling walleyes were stocked each year from 1998-2004. Stocked walleye survived in Pound Lake, but did not do as well as they did in other lakes, such as Flannagan Reservoir in Dickenson County. The decision was made in 2005 to discontinue walleye stocking at Pound Lake. A limited number of walleye are produced in Department hatcheries each year, and the Department is committed to stocking those walleye into lakes where they will provide the best populations for anglers.

Channel catfish, flathead catfish and bullheads are available for anglers. Channel catfish are now being stocked annually, and sample catch rates have increased dramatically. Catfish fishing opportunities should also improve as these stocked fish have a chance to grow and reach bigger sizes.

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